SPEECH FROM THE THRONE
HIGHLIGHTS – MARCH 14, 2002

PROVINCE OF OPPORTUNITY

"Saskatchewan is able to look to the future with confidence, knowing the wealth of human and natural resources that we possess."

A COMMITMENT IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

- Provincial government is able to meet immediate needs and expand Saskatchewan's economy.
- Living within our means; seizing our opportunities.
- Restructured government will enhance service, apply new technologies and achieve savings.

A PLAN OF ACTION FOR SASKATCHEWAN:

Investment in the Economy and the Environment

Opportunity abounds in many sectors of our economy:

- Investment attraction based on competitive and taxation advantages.
- Final report of the Action Committee on the Rural Economy will form the basis to diversify the rural economy and create jobs.
- An energy development and conservation strategy and a Greenprint for Ethanol Production will also contribute to rural revitalization.
- Actions to ensure that Saskatchewan people have a sustainable, safe and clean supply of drinking water.
- Canadian Light Source synchrotron will magnify research and development in the province.
- Synchrotron and Film Sound Stage will attract investment and create new career opportunities.

Investment in Infrastructure

Important to both the economy and quality of life:

- 700 km of highway reconstruction and paving.
- SaskTel to extend high speed internet to 191 more communities by 2003 and expand digital cellular telephone coverage.
- CommunityNet high speed internet provided to an additional 460 community and government centres.
- SaskPower and SaskEnergy plan $350 million investment in provincial infrastructure.

Provision of Quality Education

Quality education is important to expanding the economy and providing opportunities for youth:

- *SchoolPLUS* adopted to integrate education and human services, building on 83 community schools.
- Expansion of on-line distance education services.
- Over 50,000 students in post-secondary education.
- Leader in Aboriginal and northern training.
- Youth participation on Crown and government boards.

Healthy and Self-Reliant Families

Good health, housing and self-reliance are fundamental to the quality of our lives:

- Expand implementation of *Kids First*, a program targeted to vulnerable children.
- Expand *Building Independence*, which has reduced social assistance caseloads.
- Construct 1,000 housing units for low-income families in urban and northern areas over the next five years.
- Begin implementation of *The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care* – measures to better manage waiting times for elective surgery, create primary health care teams, increase recruitment and training activities, begin training of 240 Emergency Medical Technicians, and establish a 24-hour phone line to offer immediate advice from registered nurses.

COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY

Working co-operatively with municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities:

- Enhance authority and accountability of local governments; consider introduction of *City Act*.
- Income assessment option for commercial properties.
- Fulfill terms of Treaty Land Entitlement agreements.

JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Commitment to the safety and security of Saskatchewan families and communities:

- Response to Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade.
- Participate in the National Sex Offender Registry.
- Strengthen the resources of our police services.
- Report on measures taken to reduce crimes committed by repeat offenders.

Recycled Paper

Province of Opportunity

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Delivered on the Occasion

of the Opening of

THE THIRD SESSION

of

THE TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE

of the

PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2002

THE HONOURABLE LYNDA HAVERSTOCK
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Welcome to the third session of the twenty-fourth Legislature of Saskatchewan.

This year marks the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne of the United Kingdom and Canada. During her 50-year reign, Her Majesty has won our admiration for the stability, integrity and vision she has brought to the Commonwealth. The Queen has encouraged us to use the Jubilee as an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which our lives have changed over the past half century, to take stock of where we stand today, and to look to the future, particularly at how youth may contribute to our society.

Dedication

With this encouragement in mind, I would like to dedicate my remarks, and the plan of my government, to the students of Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School in Regina – students who ably represent our future hopes and aspirations.

Sacred Heart School is one of Saskatchewan's vibrant community schools.

The students, staff and parents of Sacred Heart School are successfully tackling the challenges that face their school and their inner city community. The school is a model of how innovation and determination can create opportunities and confidence. In fact, an international panel has recognized the school's achievements. Sacred Heart will be showcased at a Model Schools Conference in Washington, D.C. this June. Their positive spirit and enthusiasm are an inspiration to all of our citizens.

I would like this Assembly to recognize the students of Sacred Heart School and their Principal, Loretta Tetreault. These are the young people whose lives you will influence by your deliberations and decisions.

I would also like to acknowledge and celebrate the successful participation of the Saskatchewan members of the 2002 Canadian Winter Olympics Team. The team gave all of us a feeling of great pride and helped to strengthen the bonds of our country. Members of this Assembly will be invited to join in a special event of tribute to our Saskatchewan Olympic athletes.

Listening and learning

Last summer, the Premier and his caucus traveled by bus throughout the province to hear the ideas, concerns and enthusiasm of Saskatchewan people – a process that will continue in 2002.

The doors of the Legislature were opened to hear the views of Saskatchewan people with respect to renewing and improving our health care services.

The Action Committee on the Rural Economy is currently completing the most in-depth consideration ever undertaken to explore opportunities to revitalize rural Saskatchewan.

These are but three examples of how my government has been listening to, and learning from, the people of Saskatchewan during the past year.

My government engaged with the people of Saskatchewan in discussing their ideas and aspirations. My government has developed a comprehensive plan and is ready to proceed with its implementation.

Province of Opportunity

Saskatchewan is able to look to the future with confidence, knowing the wealth of human and natural resources that we possess. My government's plan will ensure these resources create opportunities for Saskatchewan citizens, communities and industry.

Opportunity abounds in many sectors of our economy:
- Diversification and value-added processing in agriculture;
- Increased development of energy resources – including green energy;
- Expansion of sustainable forestry production and manufacturing;
- Growth in our cultural industries;
- New tourism destinations and services; and
- Mining including base metals, diamonds and other mineral deposits.

Indeed, Saskatchewan recently surpassed British Columbia to become our nation's third largest mineral producer. We are also Canada's second largest producer of oil and gas.

Our citizens demonstrate their determination to take advantage of these opportunities in many ways.

Saskatchewan has led all provinces in increasing its gross domestic product per capita. And we continue to lead the country in many ways. Our manufacturing productivity is among the highest in Canada. We lead the way in small business – with more per capita than any other western province. We lead the way in high school graduation rates. We lead the way in university enrollment rates for 18 to 24 year olds – the highest in the western provinces and well above the national average.

Confidence and optimism in Saskatchewan's economic future is increasing on all fronts. The bond rating houses and financial institutions have repeatedly upgraded the province's credit rating – nine times since 1995.

The TD Bank Financial Group recently expressed confidence in the growth of Saskatchewan's economy. While the Bank projects that real personal disposable income will fall for most Canadians this year, it forecasts that Saskatchewan residents will enjoy the nation's largest average increase in personal income during 2002.

Since 1999, KPMG's international surveys have consistently shown that Saskatchewan's cities are among the most competitive in the world. Saskatchewan's four largest centres have ranked higher than the Canadian average, and are equal to, or better than, cities such as Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver.

Investors and companies, from here in Saskatchewan and from beyond our borders, are participating in the economic renewal of our province. Tolko Industries is developing an Oriented Strand Board Plant in Meadow Lake in partnership with northern communities. Premium Brands has led the expansion of Harvest Foods' specialty meat products factory in the Yorkton area. Centennial Foods has developed an ultra-modern food processing plant in Saskatoon. These are recent examples of how Saskatchewan is steadily diversifying its economy. These three projects alone are providing more than 500 direct jobs for Saskatchewan people.

The potential of our economy, combined with our central geographic location, the entrepreneurial spirit of our people and the quality of our public services, means that Saskatchewan is quickly becoming Canada's province of opportunity.

A commitment in a time of uncertainty

However, the world, Canada, and Saskatchewan have faced uncertainty in recent months. Indeed, since this Assembly adjourned last year, the world has changed dramatically.

Here at home, 2001 was one of the driest years in our history, with drought affecting 60 per cent of our farmland and pastures. International subsidies continue to impact prices for many agricultural commodities. Oil and natural gas prices have severely affected our energy sector and our province as a whole. Softwood lumber duties levied by the United States have affected our forest industry. We have felt the economic slowdown in the United States – the destination for about two-thirds of Saskatchewan's exports.

It is reasonable, therefore, to ask how the government's optimism and commitment to continued social and economic development can be maintained at a time when revenues are declining for governments across Canada and beyond.

My government has spent a decade restoring the fiscal stability and credibility of the province. During the past eight years, the people of Saskatchewan have paid down $3.7 billion in public debt. Tax-supported debt has fallen from 49 per cent to 23 per cent of our gross domestic product.

Creation of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund has given my government a degree of flexibility in managing fluctuating revenues. However, as with other provinces, Saskatchewan must now face difficult choices in matching future revenues and expenditures.

Nevertheless, my government will maintain its commitment to meet Saskatchewan's immediate priorities *and* to expand our economy.

This commitment will not permit unsustainable tax reductions, a return to massive deficits, or the sale of major Crown corporation assets that could jeopardize the long-term strength of the provincial economy.

This commitment will instead require the co-operation of Saskatchewan people to live within our means while we seize our opportunities.

This commitment also demands that my government remain dynamic and focused to implement its plan of action for Saskatchewan. To that end, a major reorganization of government will soon be undertaken. A restructured government will focus on the means to enhance public services, improve performance, apply new technologies and achieve savings.

A plan of action for Saskatchewan

My government's plan to expand our economy and to create new opportunities for our young people is based on four pillars:

- Investment in the economy and the environment;
- Investment in infrastructure;
- Provision of quality education; and
- Healthy and self-reliant families.

Investment in the Economy and the Environment

Economic growth in Saskatchewan will continue to be led by the private sector and private investment. However, public policy and government initiatives can serve as a catalyst to investment. For that purpose, my government continues to reduce taxes. In 2002, an average Saskatchewan family will pay almost a third less provincial income tax than in 1993. The provincial income tax rate for small business is now 40 per cent lower than in 1991.

My government has created an Investment Attraction Council to work with our business community to increase investment in our province and simplify the regulatory process. Armed with an analysis of our competitive business and taxation advantages, the Council will heighten awareness of Saskatchewan's development potential throughout the investment community.

In recent years, traditional farm employment has fallen dramatically across Canada, affected by commodity prices and mechanization. However, Saskatchewan is blessed with 46 per cent of all the arable land in Canada. While my government shares concerns should the drought continue, it also believes this land base provides the means to stimulate new growth in the rural regions of our province.

Two key initiatives have been taken to support this objective.

The Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) was created to identify and recommend options to further diversify the rural economy and create jobs. This Assembly will soon receive the final ACRE report and proposals. Those proposals will form the basis of my government's action plan for rural revitalization.

The ACRE recommendation regarding farmland ownership restrictions, pertaining to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act,* will be referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture for full debate during this session of the Legislature.

My government is also advocating a comprehensive National Farm Safety Net Program. The Saskatchewan proposal, developed with advice from our farm leaders, calls for the federal government to support the following measures:

- a meaningful insurance program, including both crops and forages;
- a crop sector revenue deficiency program that offsets the impact of international subsidies; and
- an enhanced margin-based program – targeted at our trade sensitive livestock sector.

Saskatchewan's known oil resources are estimated at 35 billion barrels, much of this in the form of heavy oil. My government will present a comprehensive energy development and conservation strategy that will build on increased heavy oil production and expansion in our natural gas sector. The strategy will also address energy efficiency and expand our ability to generate electricity from co-generation facilities and renewable energy sources including wind power.

Saskatchewan is also well positioned to become a national leader in the production of renewable fuels such as ethanol. Ethanol has the potential to further diversify our agricultural economy and help reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. My government will introduce a Greenprint for Ethanol Production that will foster growth in this industry.

As the federal government considers ratifying the proposed Kyoto protocol, my government will continue to work jointly with Canada to evaluate implications of the protocol for Saskatchewan's environment and economy.

Saskatchewan people recognize the importance of climate change as an environmental and economic issue. Initiatives will be continued to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our province. A new Office of Energy Conservation will be established.

My government's action plan also addresses other environmental measures necessary to ensure sustainable economic growth. A number of amendments to *The Forest Resources Management Act* will be proposed to ensure that province-wide standards are applied to all forest operations in Saskatchewan.

Safe drinking water is an essential element of a healthy environment and strong economy. This year, my government will introduce direct actions and legislative changes to ensure that the citizens of Saskatchewan have a sustainable, safe and clean supply of drinking water.

Research and development is necessary to promote a strong economy in a modern industrial society. Saskatchewan is an active participant in health, agricultural and industrial research and development. Our two universities, the Petroleum Technology Research Centre in Regina, Innovation Place in Saskatoon, a new Forestry Development Centre based in Prince Albert, and the Saskatchewan Research Council provide a significant research capacity within the province.

Plans will be presented to the Assembly to significantly increase health research undertaken in our province.

Our province's role in research and development will soon be magnified by the Canadian Light Source synchrotron at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. It is the largest scientific project undertaken in Canada during the last 30 years. The synchrotron will provide researchers with leading edge technology to serve a *national* research and development mandate. It will be vital to academic and industrial scientists in many disciplines.

My government will announce plans to establish a synchrotron institute to ensure we fully achieve the economic potential of related research activity within Saskatchewan.

The province's cultural community is also an important contributor to our economic growth. Saskatchewan writers, artists, performers, producers and technicians give form and voice to the values that define us as a people. Increasingly, they attract worldwide audiences and acclaim.

To acknowledge the growing importance of Saskatchewan's artistic community to our economy and society, *The Saskatchewan Status of the Artist Act* will be introduced.

During this session, my government, together with the SaskFilm and Video Development Corporation, will open the new, $11.5 million state-of-the-art film and video sound stage in Regina. The sound stage will enable our province to fully participate in international film and video production.

Drawing investment from around the world, the sound stage, as with the synchrotron, adds to the diverse and exciting range of career opportunities available within the province. They provide opportunities for our own young people and for those who choose to relocate to Saskatchewan to pursue careers made possible by these investments in our economy.

Our Crown utility corporations represent another competitive advantage in support of economic growth in Saskatchewan. They provide quality services and offer consumer and commercial rates that are among the lowest in Canada. They also keep head offices, good jobs and profits here at home, supporting local suppliers and providing dividends that help fund essential public services.

Crown corporations also provide the opportunity to partner with private companies in attracting investment for new and expanded enterprises.

A modern economy, such as ours, must ensure that its workers and consumers are protected.

My government will respond to the review of *The Workers' Compensation Act,* undertaken during 2001. A number of recommended changes in the operations of the Workers' Compensation Board will be implemented this year. Further changes, including those requiring legislation, will be determined following consultation with the Board's stakeholders.

Pay equity is an important principle in our contemporary workplace. My government has implemented that principle for more than 25,000 workers employed by provincial departments and agencies, Crown corporations, and several training institutions. My government will continue to encourage the application of pay equity in the health sector.

Saskatchewan legislation must also keep pace with changing technology and practices in the marketplace. Amendments to various Acts will be proposed to address internet purchases; credit card information use; debt collection agency practices; fund-raising company licensing; and cost-of-credit disclosure requirements.

My government will present the Assembly with a series of amendments to *The Automobile Accident Insurance Act.* These will allow for three major improvements to services provided by Saskatchewan Government Insurance.

A Safe Driver Rewards Program will provide insurance premium discounts to safe drivers. Improvements will be made to the Personal Injury Protection Plan. As well, Saskatchewan drivers will be given the choice of alternative insurance coverage that allows for judicial resolution of accident claims.

Investment in Infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure is important to both the economy and quality of life in Saskatchewan.

My government is in the midst of the single largest public infrastructure project in our history – a $900 million, three-year plan to improve our highways. Members of this Assembly will be asked to approve plans for more than 700 kilometers of highway reconstruction and paving.

New highway construction technologies will be used to assist in constructing high quality transportation corridors that will facilitate economic growth in the province.

In partnership with many municipalities, the government is building better roads.

Saskatchewan leads the nation in extending state-of-the-art telecommunication services to rural and northern citizens.

The CommunityNet program will extend high-speed internet service to a further 460 health, education, community and government centres across the province – ensuring that Saskatchewan residents, organizations and businesses have access to modern internet services. As well, SaskTel will extend high-speed internet to homes and businesses in 191 more communities by 2003.

High-speed internet service and the expansion of digital cellular telephone coverage are examples of how my government invests in provincial infrastructure and supports rural revitalization.

SaskPower and SaskEnergy will also contribute to infrastructure renewal in the province. These corporations will invest $350 million in 2002 to meet the energy needs of consumers and industry.

The renewal of municipal infrastructure will continue, assisted by the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program and Saskatchewan's Centenary Fund.

Provision of Quality Education

Quality education is the third pillar in my government's action plan to expand Saskatchewan's economy.

During the past four years, provincial funding for kindergarten to Grade 12 education increased by 24 per cent. My government is proud to have responded to the innovation and dedication of our educators and the long-term needs of our youth.

Saskatchewan's community schools program is a leader in progressive education. In 83 community schools, parent, community and professional resources come together to help students learn and grow.

The government's new Prince of Wales Scholarships will be targeted to encourage Grade 11 students in community schools to complete high school.

Building on the experience of community schools and the innovation of Saskatchewan educators, the Role of the School Task Force developed the concept of *SchoolPLUS. SchoolPLUS* will integrate education and human services to ensure that our schools are able to respond to the particular needs of *each* community and *all* of our students. My government has endorsed the concept of *SchoolPLUS* and will work with our province's educators and human service agencies to ensure its implementation.

Saskatchewan's commitment to post-secondary education will also be maintained. Well over 50,000 Saskatchewan students will participate in classes and training programs this year through the province's universities, SIAST, regional colleges and private vocational schools. As well, on-the-job training programs and the work of Saskatchewan's Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission will continue to be key instruments in meeting our training needs.

Of particular significance is the growing number of First Nations and Métis students who participate in provincial education and training opportunities. Saskatchewan is a national leader in providing training geared to Aboriginal students, often delivered through Aboriginal and northern training institutions.

The Northern Health Sciences Access Program and the Northern Nursing Education Program are initiatives that will be valuable to increase the number of northerners trained as health professionals in our province.

Through the development of Campus Saskatchewan, our post-secondary institutions will increase on-line and distance learning opportunities for Saskatchewan people. The government will also support increased delivery of high school programs via the internet. Students in rural, northern and urban locations will have new opportunities to access a greater range of programs through on-line learning.

In addition to its direct investment in education, my government's plan includes other initiatives to tap the vitality and ideas of our youth.

During the next year, the Centennial Student Employment Program will generate unique career development opportunities and provide employment experience for 1,300 Saskatchewan young people.

Young people have said to government – "give us a voice at the table". In response, young people will be given opportunities for mentorship, training and decision-making as members of the Boards of our Crown Corporations and a variety of other agencies and commissions of the government.

Healthy and Self-Reliant Families

My government's action plan for Saskatchewan recognizes that good health and good housing are fundamental to the quality of our lives. My government is also determined that the opportunity to participate in our economy will be extended to all of our citizens.

Therefore, the fourth pillar of my government's core strategy is to support the development of healthy and self-reliant families.

One way we can do this is to ensure early childhood development for vulnerable children. *Kids First* has been designed and developed as a joint program that involves community members and professionals working together. Its expanded implementation will proceed this year.

Building Independence is a support program that has reduced social assistance caseloads to the lowest level in ten years by increasing participation in the labour force. *Building Independence* will be expanded during the next year to give more families the opportunity for greater participation in our economy.

Through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, my government provides affordable, quality housing to more than 67,000 lower income residents of the province. With the renewed support of the Government of Canada, a new five-year housing initiative to construct 1,000 additional housing units in urban and northern areas will begin this year.

One of my government's highest priorities in its action plan for Saskatchewan is the provision and renewal of sustainable, publicly administered health care that is accessible to all.

Last December, my government released ***The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care,*** a long-term plan to improve and secure health care for all Saskatchewan people.

This Assembly will be presented with a budget and legislative amendments to help implement that Plan, facilitating a practical approach to change, at a manageable pace.

My government will implement measures to better manage waiting times for elective surgery, create primary health care teams throughout the province, increase recruitment and training activities, and establish a 24-hour phone line that offers immediate advice from a registered nurse. A program to train 240 Emergency Medical Technicians will also begin this year.

The Paramedics Act will be introduced to recognize the growing levels of training among emergency service professionals and create a self-regulatory body for their members.

My government will introduce legislation to establish 12 new Regional Health Authorities and Canada's first Health Quality Council – an independent advisory board that will encourage excellence throughout the health care system and report to the public on health care quality issues.

As Saskatchewan begins to implement its long-term plan for health care, the issue of funding must be addressed. It is my government's view that Canadians value their health care system and support the need to reinstate additional federal funding for health services. While administrative efficiencies and illness prevention programs can assist in managing costs, the federal government is a necessary partner in addressing this national priority.

Healthy and self-reliant families, the provision of quality education, investment in infrastructure and investment in the economy – these are the four pillars of my government's action plan for Saskatchewan.

Communities of Opportunity

To achieve our goal of building the province of opportunity, we must also assist in building communities of opportunity by working with municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities.

Municipal governments have expressed interest in increasing their autonomy and authority to deliver quality public services to their communities.

The cities of the province have suggested a *City Act* that would more fully recognize their evolution and independence as larger municipal governments. Introduction of a *City Act* will therefore be considered as the basis for discussion and consultation about the concept being proposed.

As well, amendments to *The Urban Municipality Act, The Rural Municipality Act,* and *The Northern Municipalities Act* to enhance the authority and accountability of local governments, will be introduced during this session.

With the support of both the municipal sector and the business community, my government will introduce amendments to *The Assessment Management Agency Act.* This will enable the introduction of the income approach to evaluation of commercial property as an alternative to current assessment tools.

First Nations and Métis citizens are rapidly increasing their participation in the social, political and economic life of our province. That is the purpose of my government's Métis and Off Reserve First Nations Strategy, an interdepartmental initiative to respond to the aspirations of Aboriginal peoples.

My government is strengthening its relationship and co-operation with Métis people, supported by the recognition contained within *The Métis Act,* proclaimed earlier this year. The government will continue to promote the participation of Métis entrepreneurs and companies in our economy through initiatives such as the Clarence Campeau Fund and the Northern Development Fund.

My government also appreciates its growing business partnerships with Saskatchewan First Nations. Of particular note is the First Nations Gaming Agreement, under which many business and employment opportunities have been created for Aboriginal residents.

My government will continue to fulfill the terms of the Treaty Land Entitlements signed with individual First Nations and the Government of Canada. Self-government negotiations will also proceed with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Canada.

Strong Aboriginal communities will enhance Saskatchewan's prospects as the province of opportunity.

Justice and Security

My government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of Saskatchewan families and communities.

Last year, the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade tabled its final report and recommendations. The government's legislative response to that report will emphasize the accountability of perpetrators and timely intervention on behalf of victims.

Saskatchewan will participate in implementation of the *National Sex Offender Registry.* The Registry will provide for the mandatory registration of former sex offenders who have been released from incarceration in Saskatchewan or who enter the province.

Saskatchewan will also join with other provinces and territories in introducing legislation to make it easier for families living in different regions of the country to obtain court orders for child maintenance. The legislation will help ensure that children receive the financial support to which they are entitled, regardless of where they live in Canada.

My government has formed the *Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform* which will soon begin its community-based hearings and consideration of possible reforms to the justice system that will benefit all citizens of the province.

During this session of the Legislature, the resources of our police services will be strengthened. The government will also monitor and report on measures taken to reduce crimes committed by repeat offenders.

Volunteers

Saskatchewan communities are enriched and strengthened by volunteers. We continue to enjoy the highest rate of voluntarism in Canada. Volunteers contribute to the growth and prosperity of our communities. My government will soon announce the Premier's Volunteer Sector Initiative. Its purpose will be to recognize, support and build an even stronger volunteer sector in Saskatchewan.

Conclusion – Wisdom for our Children's Children

I have spoken about the sense of uncertainty that has faced our economy and our world in recent months.

More than one hundred years ago, great uncertainty also faced the First Nations of the Canadian prairies as they made Treaties with the Queen and the Government of Canada. The wisdom of those First Nation Chiefs, recorded at the time of the Treaty negotiations and signings, still rings true today as we consider the opportunities and choices that face the people of Saskatchewan.

One such Chief was Ahtahkakoop – Starblanket – whose life and people were recently documented by Saskatchewan writer Deanne Christensen. In 1896, Chief Ahtahkakoop counselled his First Nation to consider how the decisions they make today would impact on the generations of the future. He said to them, and I quote:

"Let us not think of ourselves but of our children's children. We hold our place among the tribes as chiefs and councillors because our people think we have wisdom above others amongst us. Then let us show our wisdom. Let us show our wisdom by choosing the right path now while we yet have a choice."

I am pleased to bring the words of Chief Ahtahkakoop to this House as you begin your deliberations to meet the needs of Saskatchewan's future generations.

Let us also think about the children who are here today from Sacred Heart Catholic Community School and from other schools in our fair province. These young people represent both an inspiration and purpose for your work. I leave you now to the business of the Session, with full confidence that the government will favourably discharge its duties and responsibilities.

May Divine Providence continue to bless our province and guide this Legislature in all its deliberations. God Save the Queen.